

# Houthis Set Oil Tanker Ablaze while Biden Tries to Woo China, by Mike Whitney - The Unz Review

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On Friday, Houthi militants fired an anti-ship ballistic missile from mainland Yemen striking a British oil tanker and setting it ablaze. “US Central Command said the Marlin Luanda had issued a distress call and reported damage” but no casualties were reported. The attack represents a significant escalation in the deepening conflict between the US-led coalition and the Yemen-based Houthis.

Here’s the question that every American should be asking himself: Is Israel’s war in Gaza strengthening or weakening America’s position in the world?

If there is some material benefit for the United States, then there might be a reasonable argument for continuing to support the policy. But if there is no benefit whatsoever, then the policy should be changed.

So, the real question is whether the US gains something from flouting international law and being an active participant in acts of barbarity against a civilian population?

How does America benefit from that?

It doesn’t, in fact, the present arrangement only benefits America’s rivals, like China and Russia, who have steadily grown stronger due to Washington’s erratic and violent behavior. The administration’s blanket support for Israel, has merely accelerated the pace at which nations in the global south and around the world are realigning with Moscow and Beijing. This isn’t a choice that foreign leaders want to make, it’s a choice they are compelled to make in order to guarantee their own security. That’s the bottom line. The idea that a population of 2 million people can be impulsively erased because of the offenses of a small group of militants, terrifies people. And what terrifies them even more is the fact that international law provides no enforceable protection for the people that are getting clobbered.

This is particularly extraordinary in the current case because—as we all know—the population that is being bombed to smithereens is all of a particular ethnicity and religion, (Arab, Muslim) which means they are being targeted for things over which they have no control. Of the two million people that are presently being

herded to the Egyptian border, none of them are Jews. That is not a coincidence. That's discrimination on a scale that should horrify everyone. Imagine if Biden got tired of the daily shootings in Chicago's South Side and decided to gather all the black people in the country and drive them to the Mexican border where they would rot in tent cities without food, water or medicine. Would that be an acceptable solution?

And, yet, that's what's taking place right now in Gaza. Netanyahu says he won't let up until " Hamas is defeated". but what does that mean?

It means he is going to continue doing what he's been doing for the last 110 days.

But, on what basis does he justify these actions. Let me explain what I mean by using a hypothetical:

Let's say a terrorist organization bombs the Capital building in Washington DC. And, immediately following the bombing, the FBI discovers ironclad proof that the group has been operating out of terrorist cells located in downtown New York City. Now, normally, the FBI would follow certain protocols and methods for apprehending as many of the terrorists as possible while trying to minimize the "collateral damage." But, this time, the FBI decides to invoke the Israeli method of fighting terrorism by carpet-bombing lower Manhattan with Tomahawk missiles and Daisy Cutters forcing millions of terrified New Yorkers to flee across the border into New Jersey.

Is that a reasonable way of dealing with terrorism? More importantly, can the existence of terrorist cells ever be used as a justification for reducing an entire city to smoldering rubble?

Of course, not. It's ridiculous, and yet, that's what Israel is doing. They are flattening all of Gaza in the name of "defeating Hamas." Who could have imagined that the extermination of an entire civilization could rest on such a flimsy pretext?

One last thing:

It's not enough that the Biden administration is providing lethal weapons and logistical support to Israel. Now, Biden has decided to wage war against the Houthis, as well. The President objects to the fact that the Houthis have imposed a blockade on Israeli-linked commercial ships in the Red Sea (in order to pressure Israel to end its blockade of food and medicine to the Palestinians.) So, the US and UK have been launching multiple missile strikes on cities and infrastructure in Yemen. The US attacks are intended to persuade the Houthis to abandon their blockade but, so far, there are no signs that they are degrading the

Houthis offensive capability at all. In contrast, The Houthi blockade is having significant impact on Israel's economy while their attacks on commercial ships have steadily intensified. In short, the Houthis appear to be winning.

On Wednesday, the Houthis fired three anti-ship ballistic missiles from the mainland at two container ships transiting the Gulf of Aden. According to a report from CENTCOM two of the missiles were intercepted by a US warship while one landed in the water. According to [antiwar.com](https://www.antiwar.com):

“Later in the day, the Houthis said their forces engaged in a two-hour battle with several US warships. Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea claimed the confrontation resulted in a Houthi missile “directly hitting an American warship, but so far, the US has not confirmed the account.”

Bottom line: The Houthi attacks forced the two commercial ships (the Maersk Detroit and the Maersk Chesapeake) to turn-around and beat a hasty retreat. In other words, the Houthi blockade held-up despite the presence of a state-of-the-art AEGIS destroyer (the USS Gravely) that was escorting the ships through the waterway. This is a clear victory for the Houthis and further proof that US naval convoys will not be able to protect commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

But will that nudge Biden towards the bargaining table?

Of course, not. Biden's not going to throw in the towel. He's going to up-the-ante like US presidents always do. So, things are going to get progressively worse. Bet on it.

Here's more from Sal Mercogliano, host of You Tube's “What's going On With Shipping”. Mercogliano is a former merchant mariner and teaches courses in maritime history. This is a blurb from Thursday's show:

The Houthis have done something unheard of.... They have interdicted 11% of world trade and they are forcing it to go around Africa. You've got to go back to the world wars to find a naval power to emerge that makes trade lanes bend and interdict supplies. That's what the Houthis have done. And they are doing it with Iranian hand-me-down missiles duct-taped together and being launched and hitting (their targets) The only savings grace, is that the missiles are so crappy, that they don't blow up like they're supposed to.

Understand, this won't last long, because once there is the realization that the Houthis are not damaging the ships enough, then you'll see a resumption of trade and the Houthi will ramp it up again. and they will try to sink and kill crew members. Understand, I don't think they are

doing this consciously right now, it's just that the missiles just aren't that great. If, they see the potential here, then they will do it. Understand, this is a targeted attack against the United States of America. This is what led to our entry into World War 1.

[Houthi Attack 2 US Containerships – Maersk Detroit and Maersk Chesapeake](#), You Tube; Minute 15:30

Houthi Attack 2 US Containerships - Maersk De...



Once again, is this going to escalate?

Of course, it's going to escalate. Because now it's a matter of national pride. The US cannot allow itself to be seen as caving in to a ragtag militia that has essentially seized control of one of the world's most critical transit corridors. That cannot stand! Which is why the US launched its ninth massive missile attack on Yemen on Friday afternoon. Unfortunately, the Houthis responded tit-for-tat by firing on British oil tanker in the Gulf of Aden. Here's a recap from *CNN*:

An oil tanker in the Gulf of Aden is on fire after a missile attack by Yemen's Houthi militants, in the latest incident linked to the Iran-backed group in the key shipping route.

The operator of the British oil tanker Marlin Luanda said Friday the vessel had been "struck by a missile in the Gulf of Aden after transiting the Red Sea," and that "firefighting equipment on board is being deployed to suppress and control the fire caused in one cargo tank on the starboard side."

The Iran-backed militants claimed responsibility for the attack, saying in a statement that they had fired on the tanker in response to the "American-British aggression against our country [Yemen]" and in support of the Palestinian people. [Oil tanker on fire in Gulf of Aden after Houthi missile attack](#), *CNN*

So, now an oil tanker has been hit which means the stakes keep getting higher all the time. Is this what Biden had in mind when he deployed his flotilla to the Red Sea? Did he really want another war 8 thousand miles away from America's shores?

And who is winning this war: The United States or the Houthis?

If you are in doubt about that question, just take a look at this clip from the Wall Street Journal:

“Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser of the USA, is on his way to Thailand – where he will meet with Wang Yi, the foreign minister of China, in an attempt to pressure him to influence the Houthis to stop the attacks in the Red Sea”

WTF? So, Biden wants China to pressure the Houthis to ease the blockade? Is that what's going on?

No, not exactly. It's actually much worse than that. Here's the story from *Reuters*:

The United States has asked China to urge Tehran to rein in the Iranian-aligned Houthi rebels attacking commercial ships in the Red Sea but has seen little sign of help from Beijing, the Financial Times reported on Wednesday, citing U.S. officials.

The U.S. has repeatedly raised the matter with top Chinese officials in the past three months, the report said. White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan and his deputy, Jon Finer, discussed the issue in meetings this month in Washington with Liu Jianchao, head of the International Liaison Department of China's Communist Party, the newspaper said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken also raised the issue with his Chinese counterpart, the report said, adding U.S. officials believe there was little evidence that China had put any pressure on Iran to restrain the Houthis beyond a mild statement Beijing issued last week... [US asks China to urge Iran to curb Red Sea attacks by Houthis -FT, Reuters](#)

Let me get this straight: The United States wants China to urge Tehran to rein in the Iranian-aligned Houthis?

Really? But didn't Biden designate China as America's Enemy Number 1 in his 2022 National Security Strategy? And hasn't Biden been trying to enlist more and more nations into his anti-China coalition? And hasn't Biden deployed the Navy multiple times to hector and harass China in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait? But now he's sent his envoys to beg for a favor?

What gall!

But—despite what you read in the western media—China isn't 'falling for it', mainly because China has had the right policy from the very beginning. So, there's no reason to change a thing. China opposed Houthi attacks on commercial vessels from the onset. That hasn't changed. By the same token, they oppose US military intervention and think that the US deliberately misled the Security Council to get a resolution that they used as a pretext for attacking Yemen. China opposes that, too, and they always have.

But, most important is that China's leaders do not accept that the troubles in the Red Sea are divorced from Israel's rampage in Gaza. They see them as the unavoidable spillover from the Israel-Palestine crisis which must be addressed directly. Check out this excerpt from an editorial at the *Global Times*:

Western media recently reported that the US has asked China to urge Tehran to rein in the pro-Iran Houthi militants, which are attacking commercial ships in the Red Sea... Since the outbreak of the Red Sea crisis, China has maintained close communication with all parties involved to ease tensions and has made proactive efforts. China has consistently called for an end to the attacks on civilian vessels and urged relevant parties to avoid exacerbating the tense situation in the Red Sea, in order to jointly safeguard the security of the Red Sea waterway....

since the recent escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict, US officials have repeatedly asked China to leverage this relationship and exert "influence" on Iran...

The recent US airstrikes against Houthi forces have not yielded the expected results, and attacks on commercial ships have not diminished. Several Western media outlets have commented that military strikes will only backfire. Pentagon officials also admitted that the military campaign against the Houthi forces is not working....

**It is not surprising that the US finds itself in such a situation because it either fails or refuses to recognize the root cause of the Red Sea crisis. While Houthi forces are responsible for harassing civilian ships, the crisis stems from the overflow of the Gaza conflict. All parties need to return to the core issue of achieving an immediate ceasefire and implementing the "two-state solution" for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. If the US does not grasp this point and continues to intensify military strikes against the Red Sea stakeholders, the result will only be to perpetuate a cycle of escalating violence. Moreover, concerning the**

core issue of the Gaza conflict, the US has yet to demonstrate a sincere stance toward peace and dialogue, contributing to the escalating tensions in the Red Sea region.... [If US Needs China in the Red Sea, It Should Talk to China Nicely](#), *The Global Times*

China is not “playing sides” or “picking winners”. It is simply stating the obvious; that the fracas in the Red Sea can’t be separated from the Israel-Palestine crisis; they are one-and-the-same. The United States needs to recommit to the remedy that has already been approved many times over, and which the vast majority of countries still support; the “two-state solution”. That has been standard US policy for 75 years, and Biden’s crazed effort to abandon that policy has created the catastrophe we see today.

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